

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2190

S E C R E T BEIRUT 5715

EO 11652: XGDS

TAGS : PINT PINS LE

SUBJ:

1. I TALKED WITH AMIN EL HAFEZ, FORMER PRIME MINISTER DESIGNATE BY TELEPHONE MAY 17. HAFEZ IS CURRENTLY UNDERTAKING NEGOTIATIONS WITH FEDAYEEN TO WORK OUT MODUS VIVENDI. IN REPLY MY QUERY HE REPORTED THAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE WITH THE FEDAYEEN ON THE " FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE". I ASSUME HE IS REFERRING TO FRANGIE' S MINIMAL DEMANDS FOR A MODUS VIVENDI BUT HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN OUT ON THE TELEPHONE. HE THOUGHT THE PRIMARY PROBLEM AT THE MOMENT WAS ONE OF CONFIDENCE AND THAT ANY AGREEMENT WITH THE FEDAYEEN WOULD BE " THEORETICAL", UNLESS MORE CONFIDENCE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES COULD BE DEVELOPED. HE HAD ALREADY SUGGESTED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT ONE WAY OF HANDLING THE CONFIDENCE PROBLEM WAS TO HAVE KAMAL JUMBLATT IN THE GOVT. KAMAL JUMBLATT, HE CLAIMED, WAS THE ONLY PERSON WITHIN THE SO- CALLED LEFTIST GROUP WHO IS ON GOOD TERMS WITH FEDAYEEN AND COULD AND WAS PREPARED TO SAY " NO" TO THE FEDAYEEN. HE CLAIMED THAT JUMBLATT WAS PREPARED TO DO THIS AND IMPLIED THAT HE ALREADY HAD BEEN TALKING TO THE SYRIANS IN THIS VEIN. (JUMBLATT LEFT FOR INDIA LAST NIGHT.) HAFEZ ALSO MAINTAINED THAT PROBLEM AT MOMENT WAS MORE A LEBANESE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEM THAN WITH THE FEDAYEEN. HE INDICATED THAT MOSLEMS WANTED

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MORE REPRESENTATION IN GOVT.

2. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH KAMAL JUMBLATT IS ENIGMATIC AND UNPREDICTABLE POLITICIAN, HE IS ONE OF LEBANON' S MORE CONSCIENTIOUS AND CAPABLE MINISTERS EVEN BY TESTIMONY OF HIS POLITICAL ENEMIES. ALTHOUGH HE WAS HELPFUL IN CONTROLLING FEDAYEEN WHEN HE WAS MINISTER OF INTERIOR IN THE SPRING OF 1970, DIFFICULT TO ASSESS HOW HE WOULD BEHAVE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. IN ANY EVENT HE IS NOT LIKELY TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE AS PRESIDENT FRANGIE DISLIKES AND DISTRUSTS HIM AND IS PARTICULARLY ANNOYED BY JUMBLATT' S CRITICISM OF THE ARMY.

3. OTHER SOURCES, CONFIRM HAFEZ' S ESTIMATE THAT THERE HAS BEEN PROGRESS TOWARD ANOTHER AGREEMENT AND THAT ONE MAY BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. AMIN EL HAFEZ SEEMS TO BE THE FRONT RUNNER FOR PRIME MINISTER IF AN AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED AND THE STATE OF EMERGENCY LIFTED. HOUGHTON

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